JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM
IDENTIFICATION FORM

AGENCY : NARA
RECORD NUMBER : 176-10037-10453
RECORD SERIES : National Security Files
AGENCY FILE NUMBER :

ORIGINATOR : CIA
FROM :
TO :
TITLE : Information Report Re: Views
DATE : 8/14/1962
PAGES : 5
SUBJECTS :
DOCUMENT TYPE :
CLASSIFICATION :
RESTRICTIONS :
CURRENT STATUS :
DATE OF LAST REVIEW : 9/10/2000
OPENING CRITERIA :
COMMENTS : National Security Files, Box 196: Countries, Vietnam, General 8/1/62-8/14/62. Box 6.

TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Vietnam

CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

S-E-C-R-E-T NOFORN/CONTINUED CONTROL/BACKGROUND USE ONLY

RETAIN OR DES

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM — REPORT NO. TDCSDB-3/651,039

SUBJECT VIEWS OF BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, H.A.F. HOHLER, ON A NEUTRALIST SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM — DATE DISTR. 14 AUGUST 1962

PRECEDENCE ROUTINE

DATE OF INFO. EARLY AUGUST 1962 — REFERENCES IN 43629

PLACE & DATE ACQ. VIETNAM, SAIGON (7 AUGUST 1962)

APPRAISAL SEE BELOW — FIELD REPORT NO. FVS-7782

SMITH-BUNDY
_DUNGAN
_KAYSEN
_KILDUFF
_PETERSEN
_SCHLESINGER
_TAYLOR
_BELK
_FORRESTAL
_JOHNSON
_KOMER

THIS IS **UNEVALUATED** INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE AN INDEPENDENT VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST (C) WITH EXTENSIVE CONTACTS, FROM ANOTHER VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST.

APPR ALTHOUGH IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT THE STATEMENTS SET FORTH IN THE REPORT WERE MADE AS INDICATED, IT IS CONSIDERED DOUBTFUL THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER ACTUALLY HOLDS THE VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM.

1. BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, H.A.F. HOHLER, TOLD A VIETNAMESE JOURNALIST ON 2 AUGUST 1962 THAT HE HAD BEEN READING SOME OF THE JOURNALIST'S ARTICLES AND WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN A LATE JUNE ARTICLE ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS AND THE SOVIETS OVER NORTH VIETNAM. AFTER DISCUSSING THESE DIFFERENCES AT LENGTH, THE AMBASSADOR STATED HIS BELIEF THAT A THIRD FORCE IN VIETNAM IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT ACTUALLY EXISTS, AND THAT SUCH A THIRD FORCE IN NORTH VIETNAM, COMBINED WITH NEUTRALIST ELEMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, IS THE ONLY HOPE FOR VIETNAM. HOHLER EMPHASIZED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION FOR SOUTH VIETNAM IS A NEUTRALIST COALITION

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

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TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

THAT WORKED OUT FOR LAOS. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT THE AMERICANS ARE NOT TRAINED IN GUERILLA WARFARE AND CAN NOT WIN THE WAR AGAINST THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS (VC) IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

2. THE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE AT THE HOME OF PETER ROBERTS, INFORMATION OFFICER AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SAIGON, WHERE ROBERTS ARRANGED A MEETING BETWEEN THE/ JOURNALIST AND AMBASSADOR HOHLER. THE/ JOURNALIST HAS KNOWN ROBERTS FOR SOME TIME THROUGH PRESS CONFERENCES AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS AMONG JOURNALISTS. HE WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT ROBERTS HAD ARRANGED THE MEETING AT THE REQUEST OF THE AMBASSADOR, WHO HAD EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO TALK WITH HIM. NEITHER THE/ JOURNALIST NOR ROBERTS HAD MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO STATE THEIR VIEWS DURING THE CONVERSATION. THE/ JOURNALIST ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR THAT, FAR FROM BEING NEUTRALIST MINDED, HE FEARS NEUTRALISM FOR SOUTH VIETNAM MORE THAN ANY OTHER SOLUTION SINCE HE BELIEVES NEUTRALISM TO BE NO MORE THAN A MAJOR STEP TOWARD ULTIMATE TAKEOVER AND CONTROL BY THE COMMUNISTS. ROBERTS POINTEDLY DISAGREED WITH AMBASSADOR HOHLER'S STATEMENT THAT THERE IS NO CHANCE OF WINNING THE WAR IN SOUTH VIETNAM, INDICATING THAT IT IS MUCH TOO EARLY TO MAKE SUCH A BLUNT STATEMENT, ALLUDING TO THE HUGE EFFORT UNDER WAY AND THE GAINS ALREADY APPARENT. ROBERTS DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE SURFACING OF THE OPERATIONS IN NORTH VIETNAM NGHE AN AND HOA BINH SHOULD DEMONSTRATE TO THE AMERICANS AND TO THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM THE FUTILITY OF SUCH OPERATIONS.

ROBERTS ALSO COMMENTED THAT HE WAS SURPRISED AT THE FAILURE OF THE VC TO REACT EARLIER IN THE PROPAGANDA FIELD TO OBVIOUSLY EXPLOITABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM AND THE AMERICANS.

4. (SOURCE COMMENT: THE JOURNALIST SAID THAT HE THINKS THE ARTICLE THAT CAUGHT THE INTEREST OF AMBASSADOR HOHLER MAY HAVE BEEN ONE DATELINED SAIGON, 29 JUNE 1962, APPEARING IN AN EARLY JULY ISSUE OF THE PHILIPPINE HERALD, ENTITLED "INTRA-PARTY RIFT IN RED NORTH VIETNAM - MOSCOW HAS AN EDGE ON PEIPING?" THE JOURNALIST SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD READ OUT OF THE CONTEXT AND MISINTERPRETED VARIOUS STATEMENTS IN THE ARTICLE TO WHICH HE REFERRED, WHICH LED HIM TO CONSIDER THE JOURNALIST A NEUTRALIST. THE STATEMENTS BELIEVED INVOLVED, WHICH APPEAR IN LAST PARAGRAPH OF THE ARTICLE, ARE AS FOLLOWS: "STUDENTS OF COMMUNIST NORTH VIETNAM HERE WERE OF AGREEMENT THAT THE REPORTED GAINS - AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING - BY THE PRO-SOVIET GROUP, WILL EXERT A TEMPERATE INFLUENCE ON THE COURSE OF EVENTS. UNLESS THE SCALES ARE TURNED BY PEIPING IN FAVOR OF ITS PUPPETS AND IF THE FREE WORLD KNOWS HOW TO CASH IN ON THE RED DISPUTE, THE CHANCES WERE NOT DISMISSED OF A LONGER TRUCE IN TOTTERING LAOS, AND EVEN OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO EMBATTLED VIETNAM."

5. (FIELD COMMENT: IN A LATE JULY CONVERSATION WITH AN AMERICAN OBSERVER, THE COUNSELLOR OF THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN SAIGON, R. A. BURROWS, ATTACKED THE DIEM GOVERNMENT, STATING THAT

THERE COULD BE NO HOPE OF PROGRESS AGAINST THE VC UNLESS DIEM WERE REMOVED. IN CRITICIZING THE ILLIBERALITY OF THE DIEM REGIME, BURROWS APPLIED STANDARDS OF CRITICISM THAT EVEN THE MOST ADVANCED WESTERN DEMOCRACY WOULD FAIL TO MEET. DURING THE SAME CONVERSATION, COLONEL HENRY LEE, MILITARY ATTACHE TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY, EXPRESSED HIS OPINION THAT THE WAR AGAINST THE VC WAS NOT PROCEEDING FAVORABLY FROM THE WESTERN POINT OF VIEW. HE APPEARED CRITICAL OF DIEM AND SEEMED INCLINED TOWARD A MILITARY JUNTA, POSSIBLY UNDER MAJOR GENERAL DUONG VAN MINH.)

6. (FIELD COMMENT. US AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM, FREDERICK E. NOLTING, COMMENTED ON 8 AUGUST THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER HAS NEVER GIVEN THE SLIGHTEST INDICATION THAT HE HOLDS THE VIEWS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM IN THIS REPORT. ON 8 AUGUST, AMBASSADOR HOHLER TOOK A COMPLETELY CONTRARY LINE IN A DISCUSSION WITH AMBASSADOR NOLTING, EXPRESSING OPTIMISM REGARDING THE PROSPECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM. AMBASSADOR NOLTING SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE INFORMATION SHOULD BE TREATED WITH GREAT RESERVE, AND WITH THE POSSIBLILITY IN MIND THAT IT MAY REPRESENT A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO CREATE MISTRUST BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN.)

7. (FIELD COMMENT. NGO DINH NHU, BROTHER AND POLITICAL ADVISOR OF PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM, TOLD AN AMERICAN OBSERVER

ON 8 AUGUST THAT, WHILE HE CONSIDERS FRENCH POLICY BOTH IN PARIS AND IN SAIGON TO HAVE AS ITS OBJECTIVE THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, HE FEELS THAT THE BRITISH HAVE A CONTRARY POLICY MORE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE US. NHU SAID THAT HE HAS HAD NO INDICATIONS THAT CAUSE HIM CONCERN WITH RESPECT TO THE BRITISH ROLE IN SOUTH VIETNAM, AND INITIATED THE COMMENT THAT AMBASSADOR HOHLER HAD SAID TO HIM RECENTLY THAT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH VIETNAM OR THE NEUTRALIZATION OF SOUTH VIETNAM WAS "UNTHINKABLE.")

8. FIELD DISSEM: STATE (AMBASSADOR ONLY), CINCPAC PACFLT PACAF ARPAC.

END OF MESSAGE